

# Mail Call



## Re: "Navy Woman Dies in Motorcycle Crash" (Summer 2004)

I am deeply bothered by your recent article in the *Sea&Shore* magazine due to the inaccurate reporting of the accident. First, the accident did not occur at 0130 on Jan. 1, 2004; it occurred at approximately 1330 on a beautiful, sun-shiny New Year's Day. I know this because I was riding my own motorcycle behind her *[the victim]* on that fateful day. *[We regret this error.—Ed.]*

Second, the victim was a **very** responsible motorcycle rider. She wore tall leather boots, leather gloves, a leather jacket, blue jeans, and a full-face helmet every time she rode. *[The fact she was wearing all this protective gear was not mentioned in the Navy mishap or police reports; they only mentioned the helmet.—Ed.]* She was an experienced rider who respected her motorcycle, the road, and traffic. She was not a risk-taker and rode very conservatively.

I understand the purpose for your article and the need to let other Sailors know what could happen, but I think you missed the opportunity to get the real message across. Motorcycle accidents happen to good riders, even when they are riding responsibly with the proper motorcycle PPE. The victim made a deadly error in her speed around an unfamiliar curve, which is a common mistake that many motorcyclists make, no matter how experienced they are. That is a message that would

have made other riders think. Unfortunately, your portrayal of the victim as a rider who was out late at night (not true) and not wearing the appropriate PPE (not true) was seen as an unfortunate death by a careless rider.

Her death and the accident is something I will never forget and shouldn't forget. The victim would have wanted other Sailors to learn from her death, but she would have wanted it to be reported accurately. This includes the picture placed in the article. I was approached by another military friend who told me "not to read the article because the picture was disturbing." I immediately knew the picture was not of her accident upon hearing there was a guardrail. I knew, but many of the victim's friends and shipmates would not know. I think using a picture of a random motorcycle accident in the article was careless and unnecessarily traumatizing to those who knew her. *[Unfortunately, generic photos often are the only ones to which we have access.—Ed.]*

I'm certain that the victim's friends and shipmates would want to know the truth of her accident and would deeply appreciate a follow-up editorial that would clarify the inaccuracies.

Sincerely,  
Lisa M. Hess  
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